

## Benchtops - Bad Bargain

**Hi ho, hi ho...** It's off to buy a table saw we go...

Forgive me; I sometimes get silly. But buying a table saw *should* be fun. Being happy with the one you buy for years and years to come, however, is also important.

Tell a typical home center salesperson you're new to woodworking and you'll find yourself looking at "benchtop" table saws. They're cheap and because you're a rookie, salespeople will assume you're more concerned about price than quality.

Don't make that mistake. Remember, forewarned is forearmed. You can buy a benchtop saw for \$100, but you'll regret it. (And I say that in full knowledge of the fact that within days I'll be hearing from somebody who builds museum-quality copies of Connecticut highboys with a \$19.95 benchtop saw he bought last week from Bob's Bargain Tools.)

Believe me, that's an exception. Benchtop saws are too small and underpowered for serious woodworking. Your saw must be capable of 'ripping' long, sometimes thick hardwood boards to narrower dimensions – safely. Benchtops can't do that. Ditto for miter saws. They're for shortening boards or angling the ends of boards, but they don't rip worth a rip (you'll pardon the phrase).

A table saw you can use for the long haul will cost at least \$500 and if you can pony-up \$1,000, it'll be money well spent. For that, you'll buy a good contractor's saw.

Hence their name, contractor's saws were originally built to be job-site portable and some still are. You, however, won't need that portability. You should buy one with a worktable that measures about 30-inches square – larger with a table extension. Cast-iron is the best material for worktables because it's very stable. Steel is second best. Use a metal yardstick or carpenter's square to make sure it's flat. If it's too low, build or buy a compact base or a platform; anchor your saw to the base or stand with bolts. Make sure the motor is at least 1.5 horsepower. Bigger motors are available, but 1.5 hp is adequate for 99 percent of the jobs you'll ever do. Bigger motors also require 220/240 wiring.

Last, the rip fence; it's what keeps boards equidistant from the blade when you're "ripping" them narrower. The fence must lock securely, slide along the rail easily and un-clamp without undue effort.

In this column, and from tool salespeople, you might hear terms you don't understand. Don't be intimidated. Ask people to translate. It's not all that tough and soon you'll be totally familiar with all that lingo you might well find a bit murky.

In the meantime, build something simple with hand tools – a bookcase, for example. It will help you appreciate your power tools when you finally get some.

Contact me at [mmcgrane@iw.net](mailto:mmcgrane@iw.net). Have a safe, happy month!

## Power Strips and Surge Suppressors

**Power strips give us** the ability to plug more products into the same outlet, which can be a help but also a hindrance to safety if used inappropriately. Power strips and surge suppressors don't provide more power to a location, just more access to the same limited capacity of the circuit into which it is connected. Keep the following safety principles in mind when using power strips and surge suppressors.

- Be sure you are not overloading the circuit. Know the capacity of the circuit and the power requirements of all the electrical items plugged into the power strip and into all the other outlets on the circuit as well as the light fixtures on the circuit.
- A heavy reliance on power strips is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs.
- Understand that a surge suppressor only protects the items plugged into it, not back along the circuit into which it is connected.
- Surge suppressors can manage the small surges and spikes sometimes generated by the turning on and off of appliances. In the event of a large surge or spike, the surge suppressor is a one-time-use protector and will likely have to be replaced.
- Not all power strips are surge suppressors, not all surge suppressors can handle the same load and events. Be sure the equipment you buy matches your needs.

## Kids' Corner Safety Poster "Never spray water at electrical lines."



**Justin Lupkes, 11 years old**

*Justin is the son of Brett and Gale Lupkes, Wheaton, Minn. They are members of Traverse Electric Cooperative, Wheaton, Minn.*

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents.

## Ethnic Eatables

### Beef Tortilla Pizza

1 lb. lean ground beef  
1 medium onion, chopped  
1 tsp. dried oregano leaves  
1 tsp. salt  
4 (10-inch) flour tortillas  
Vegetable oil

1 medium tomato, chopped  
1 T. thinly sliced fresh basil leaves  
1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese  
1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese

Brown ground beef and onion in skillet over medium heat 8 to 10 minutes or until beef is no longer pink; drain. Stir in oregano and salt. Lightly brush tortillas with oil. Bake tortillas on 2 baking sheets at 400°F. for 3 minutes. Spoon beef mixture evenly over top of each tortilla. Top with an equal amount of tomato. Sprinkle with basil and cheeses. Bake 12 to 14 minutes or until lightly browned.

**Dorothy Horst, Canton, Cooperative Connections**

### Norwegian Lefse

5 lbs. potatoes  
1/4 cup cream  
1 tsp. salt

1/3 cup melted butter  
1-1/2 cups flour

Boil potatoes with skins on, peel and rice the potatoes while hot. Mix cream, salt and butter into riced potatoes; chill. Work 3/4 of a cup of flour into 1/2 of the riced potato mixture. Divide the dough into small pieces, roll thin and bake on a 450°F. to 500°F. griddle. Keep dough mixture cold while baking lefse. Repeat directions with the remaining flour and riced potato dough.

**Adeline Tveidt, Brandon, Cooperative Connections**

### Gnuniku Negimaki - Japanese Steak and Scallion Rolls

1/2 lb. beef sirloin, cut to 1/4-inch thickness  
1 bunch scallions, trimmed with approximately 3 inches green remaining and cut in half lengthwise  
Fresh ginger, about 4 pieces or 1 tsp. ground ginger  
1 tsp. ground ginger  
1 T. sugar  
2 T. rice vinegar, if unavailable, 1 T. mild white vinegar  
2 T. cornstarch mixed with 1 T. water

**Teriyaki Sauce:**  
1 cup soy sauce

Mix well all ingredients for Teriyaki Sauce in a shallow glass or ceramic dish – DO NOT USE METAL. Set aside to allow flavors to blend. Place steak between 2 sheets of wax paper and pound with a cleaver or mallet to about 1/8-inch thickness. Cut meat on the diagonal, making 2 triangles. Place 4 to 6 scallions on meat at wide end and roll tightly, securing last fold with a toothpick. Place each roll in Teriyaki Sauce and turn several times to coat well. Place each roll on broiler rack. Turn rolls over after 3 to 4 minutes to broil other side. Remove rolls, placing on serving platter and slice into 1-inch pieces. These may be served as an appetizer or accompanied by rice as a main dish.

**Nancy Brooks, Rosebud, Cooperative Connections**

### Senegalese Soup

1 T. butter or margarine  
2 T. finely chopped onion  
3 T. flour  
2 tsp. curry powder  
2 (14.5 oz.) cans chicken broth  
2 T. fresh lime juice  
1/4 cup honey  
1 cup whole kernel corn, fresh or frozen  
1 cup whole milk  
1/2 lb. cooked bay shrimp  
Salt, optional

In medium saucepan, melt butter over medium heat. Add onions; cook and stir 3 to 5 minutes or until onions are tender. Stir in flour and curry powder; cook and stir 1 minute. Whisk in chicken broth, lime juice and honey. Bring to a boil; stir in corn. Reduce heat and simmer 3 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in milk and shrimp. Season with salt. Transfer to soup bowl; cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours or until well chilled.

**Pictured, Cooperative Connections**

### Italian Bruschetta

1 loaf Italian bread, sliced thick crosswise. For smaller portions you can also use bagel chips, rye chips or similar chips or crackers.  
6 to 8 roma tomatoes, chopped  
1 small red onion or 8 to 10 green onions, chopped

4 cloves garlic, minced  
2 T. dried basil  
1 T. dried oregano  
1 tsp. hot salt  
Pepper to taste  
1/4 to 1/3 cup olive oil  
Grated parmesan cheese, optional

If using bread, place sliced bread under broiler briefly to toast. Mix all remaining ingredients except cheese. The flavor is enhanced if this mixture is allowed to set for at least 15 minutes. Spread mixture on top of bread or chips, top with cheese if desired and place under the broiler until hot.

**Ed Anderson, Pierre, Cooperative Connections**

### Halupsi - German Pigs in a Blanket

Cabbage Leaves  
1-1/2 lbs. ground beef  
3/4 cup uncooked rice  
4 tsp. salt, divided  
1/4 tsp. pepper

Onion as desired  
3 T. vinegar  
1 cup tomato juice  
1/2 cup water  
3 T. sugar

Soften cabbage leaves in very hot water. Combine ground beef, rice, 2 tsp. salt, pepper and onion. Form mixture into rolls. Wrap each roll in a cabbage leaf, fasten with toothpick. Combine remaining ingredients in large kettle. Place pigs in blanket in juice and cook, covered, until done.

**Betty Littau, Winner, Cooperative Connections**

Please send your favorite dessert and salad recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in June 2007. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.